

City of Morgan Hill
City Council Policy Issue Briefing

Future Baseball/Softball Field

Policy Considerations:

Although the City already exceeds its General Plan goal of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, the community's sports field (baseball and softball) needs have not been met as recommended in the adopted Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Programming Master Plan.

To achieve this goal requires the acquisition of park land and a financial strategy to operate and maintain the fields. The Council previously decided to evaluate potential sports field sites within and outside of the City's border. At this point of the evaluation process, staff is seeking Council direction on how to proceed before going any further.

1. Community v. Regional serving fields
 - a. Is it the Council's priority to serve community teams first and regional customers second?
 - b. Is it the Council's priority to develop fields that serve both the community teams and regional customers equally?
2. Is it the Council's goal to retain all decision-making authority for park development and park use?

Fiscal Impact:

\$5.580 million has been budgeted in the FY 11-12 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to purchase park land. Funding for this project is from impact fees paid by residential development and cannot be used for other City services or projects. Funding has not been identified for park development and operations. From a revenue perspective, another quality sports field complex could further the City's economic development efforts as a regional venue for youth athletic events.

Prior Council Action:

In January 2001, the Council adopted the Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Master Plan to guide the planning, design, operation, and maintenance of the City's parks and recreation system for the next 20 years. The Master Plan was also incorporated into the General Plan.

In October 2004, the Council adopted the "Morgan Hill Sports Complex Master Plan" (Exhibit A) for the Outdoor Sports Center (OSC).

In January 2009, based on the recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Council adopted the following priorities and directed staff to proceed with exploring park land acquisition.

1. Land-bank acreage for a sports park (20+ acres)
2. Land-bank acreage for a community park (10+ acres)
3. Land-bank acreage for a neighborhood park(s) (3-10 acres)
4. Develop the second phase of the Outdoor Sports Center (OSC) to include four baseball/softball fields

In September 2009, the Council approved a purchase agreement for a 43 acre parcel known as the “Pumpkin Patch” on Monterey Road just outside the City’s boundary. After a lengthy due diligence period, the Council decided to cancel the contract because the total cost of acquisition was higher than anticipated. In 2010, the Council established a goal that by December it would evaluate feasible sites for sports fields to meet community needs.

In December 2010, the City Council revised its adopted park acquisition priorities by eliminating its fourth priority to “develop the second phase of the OSC.” This decision was made due the popularity of the OSC as a community and regional serving venue for youth soccer, football, field hockey, rugby and other sports requiring rectangular fields. The Council’s existing priorities are:

1. Land-bank acreage for a sports park (20+ acres)
2. Land-bank acreage for a community park (10+ acres)
3. Land-bank acreage for a neighborhood park(s) (3-10 acres)

The Council also directed staff to evaluate sites for each priority concurrently and to consider land within and outside the City’s borders.

Background

General Plan policy 18h provides the framework for the planning and design of parks and recreation facilities:

Parks and recreational facilities shall be designed to primarily meet community needs. Regional need may be a consideration in the planning and design of recreation facilities if there are long-term operations and maintenance benefits 9such as facilities where regional tournaments may help offset long-term operations costs) and/or to meet other General Plan goals (such as economic development). Facilities that may meet regional needs shall be located and designed in such a way to minimize impact on residential neighborhoods.

The Parks, Facilities, and Recreation Programming Master Plan was approved by City Council in January 2001 as a guide for the planning, design, operations, and maintenance of the City’s parks and recreation system for the next 20 years. The City undertook an extensive community input process that started with the 1996 visioning process.

The Master Plan was incorporated into the City's General Plan to ensure consistency between planning documents. The City's goal is to achieve a standard of 5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents per the formula outlined in the "Existing Park Land Inventory" table (Exhibit B). It is important to note that the City's actual park acres per 1,000 residents increased as a result of the 2010 Census since the previous estimated number of residents was higher than the Census count (40,246 to 37,882). Although there are presently about 5.46 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, the community's sports fields (baseball and softball) needs have not yet been met.

During 2008, a Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) sub-committee worked with City staff to develop a strategy for purchasing additional park land. Through a series of meetings, the PRC identified areas within or adjacent to the City that may be suitable for future park sites.

Based on the recommendation from the PRC, the Council adopted the following priorities in January 2009 and directed staff to proceed with exploring park land acquisitions.

1. First priority to land-bank acreage for a sports park (20+ acres)
2. Second priority to land-bank acreage for a community park (10+ acres)
3. Third priority to land-bank acreage for a neighborhood park(s) (3-10 acres)
4. Fourth priority to develop the second phase of the OSC to include four baseball/softball fields.

The PRC's recommended priorities were intended to take advantage of favorable land prices due to the down economy. It was believed that reduced land prices may provide the City with an opportunity to purchase a sufficient number of acres (20+) to land bank for future baseball/softball fields. In addition, the PRC communicated that there may also be a revenue generating component of a baseball/softball facility from community and regional tournaments. Furthermore, the PRC indicated that it viewed the priorities as "fluid" and if a favorable opportunity presents itself in any one of the priorities, the City may want to evaluate it further.

After staff completed an extensive property evaluation (21 properties in total), the Council held a closed session to provide direction on the price and terms for the acquisition of the property routinely referred to as the "Pumpkin Patch," just south of the City's border on Monterey Road. The Council decided that it was in the community's best interest to pursue the purchase of this 43+ acre parcel to land bank for future sports fields and a community park. Upon completion of negotiations with the property owner, the Council approved the purchase agreement in September 2009. However, after an extended due diligence period, the Council decided to terminate the purchase agreement in February 2010.

At its 2010 annual retreat, the Council established a goal that by December 2010 it would evaluate feasible sites for sports fields to meet community needs. On December 15, 2010, the City Council revised its adopted park acquisition priorities by eliminating its fourth priority to "develop the second phase of the Outdoor Sports Center."

1. Land-bank acreage for a sports park (20+ acres)

2. Land-bank acreage for a community park (10+ acres)
3. Land-bank acreage for a neighborhood park(s) (3-10 acres)

The Council also directed staff to evaluate sites for each priority concurrently and to consider land within and outside the City's borders.

Since then, staff has been engaged in discussions with local developers and land owners about potential sites that may work for a future sports park and has continued its discussions with the Morgan Hill Unified School District (MHUSD) about a potential neighborhood park/school site on Peet Road.

The PRC's park acquisition sub-committee has continued to meet with staff to review options and discuss strategy. As part of this, staff has identified areas within and outside the City borders that may be ultimately considered for acquisition. In addition, a resident has approached the City about building youth baseball and softball fields in the future Butterfield detention basin.

Today, the Council's sports field's policy considerations center on:

- Community serving v. regional serving
- Parcel size
- Cost per acre
- Park development timing
- Park development approval jurisdiction

Sports Field Acquisition and Development Matrix

Location	Estimated Size	Estimated Price per Acre	Acquisition Authority	Serve Local Needs	Serve as a Regional Venue	Development Approval Authority	Development Timing
City	20 +/- acres	\$5.00 - \$15.00	City	Yes	For smaller scale tournaments	City	Immediately as funds are available
Unincorporated County	25+ acres	\$.50 - \$2.50	City	Yes	Dependent on County approval	County *LAFCO has jurisdiction over extending City services (sewer and water)	Dependent on County approving development plan and potential LAFCO involvement

Within City Limits Considerations

If the Council desires to retain all decision-making authority for park land acquisition and development, then it would be reasonable to consider purchasing land within the City's limits. However, the Council may be limited to purchasing a smaller parcel (20 +/- acres) due to land availability and price. A 20 +/- acre site would be sufficient to meet the community's needs, but

may make it more difficult to serve as a regional venue or to expand if future community demand increases.

Purchasing land within the City may, however, accelerate the use of vacant land that may otherwise sit idle due to the effects of the economic downturn.

Unincorporated County Considerations

Since many 20+ acre parcels suitable for sports fields are located outside the City, it is important for the Council to understand some of the issues that may impact the long-term viability of these sites. This is especially true for active sports fields that serve both community and regional teams. Both LAFCO and County Planning staff have communicated a concern with any possible development in the unincorporated parts of the County that are inconsistent with each agency's policies. If both of these agencies' positions remain the same, it may be difficult for the City to develop an unincorporated site with the number of fields necessary to serve both the community and regional events and with City water/sewer service. In all likelihood, the Council would be able to develop an unincorporated site with community serving fields, but utilizing it as a regional venue may be more difficult since the County has expressed concern with developing this type of venue.

Even though it is premature to conclude that the City should not purchase park land in unincorporated County and develop it for sports fields, ultimately the County would need to approve the City's development plans for the site. Three areas the Council may want to consider include the future Butterfield detention basin, Southeast Quadrant, and the "Pumpkin Patch" site.

Butterfield Detention Basin

The 30+ acre flood control basin is a requirement of the adopted Butterfield Boulevard Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and will be constructed in unincorporated County land (Maple and Railroad). City engineering staff has dedicated a significant amount of time and resources to acquiring property, designing the project, and working with regulatory agencies for approval.

A local resident presented staff with the idea to build youth ball fields in the basin to leverage resources. Conceptually, the City could use its Park Impact funds to construct the fields since the property is already be owned by the City. Thus, the reality of fields could be achieved sooner than land-banking another property.

City staff presented the County with the concept to incorporate fields into the design and was informed by County staff that if the City wants to consider this as a joint use site, the County would require that all previously completed environmental and hydrological work be amended to include fields. Since the approval process for the flood control process is very complex and requires a significant amount of engineering staff time, staff has concluded that the primary use

as a detention basin must remain the highest priority and has discontinued its evaluation of the site for fields.

Once the detention basin project is completed, the Council may want to consider this site for fields. At that point, staff could formally evaluate the appropriateness of the site for fields, while preserving the main function as a detention basin. Variables that may be considered include, but are not limited to; location, transportation impacts, engineering requirements, flood control function impacts on maintenance operations, parking, community use, regional use, and partnership opportunities. Staff would also evaluate the site to ensure consistency with the General Plan. Currently, General Plan policy 18p states:

Larger (2 acres or greater) flood basins may be considered for parks provided that the flood control function does not preclude the desired recreational function.

Southeast Quadrant

As was discussed with the Council in 2009, the Southeast Quadrant (SEQ) has several parcels that may meet the Council's goal to acquire 20+ acres. In fact, it is conceivable that 30 +/- acres sites may be available for purchase. This would allow for long-term park expansion as the community's population grows and sports field demands increase.

Included in the Council's policy papers is a SEQ report authored by the Community Development Agency. It is important to note that the Agriculture Program consultant estimated the value of land for a 20 – 50 acre parcel of SEQ land to be \$35,000 per acre. From a park acquisition perspective, Community Services' staff continues to monitor the process.

“Pumpkin Patch”

At the time this paper was written, the 43 acre “Pumpkin Patch” was still for sale. Since it was determined in 2009 that this site could meet the community's needs for a 20+ acre sports complex and for a 16 acre community park, the Council may want to reconsider this site for acquisition. Currently, the entire site is leased to Uesugi Farms for farming operations and its annual Uesugi Farms Pumpkin Park that operates for the entire month of October each year. The acquisition cost would include land plus relocation of tenants (business and residences) when the fields are developed.

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December 2011

Exhibit A



2004 Master Plan

Morgan Hill Outdoor Sports Center
City of Morgan Hill, California

Bellinger Foster Steinmetz
Landscape Architecture
January 17, 2007

Exhibit B

Existing Park Land Inventory

Population updated according to the 2010 Census

Park Type	Total Acres	Allowable Acres	Park Land Calculation
City Owned Park -Community Parks (32.28 acres) -Neighborhood Parks (19.97 acres) -Mini Parks (7.11 acres)	59.36	100 percent of total acres	59.46
Special Use Facility -Aquatics Center (8.54 acres) -Community & Cultural center (6.97 acres) -Centennial Recreation Center (8.70 acres) -Outdoor Sports Center (38 acres)	62.21	100 percent of total acres	62.21
Trails	20.77	100 percent of total acres	20.77
Recreational Open Space	320	10 percent of total acres	32
HOA Parks -Recreation (45.98 acres) -Open space (26.59 acres)	72.57	50 percent of recreational acreage and 10 percent of open space	25.65
Schools -Nordstrom (3.96 acres) -Paradise (2.62 acres)	6.58	100 percent of recreation facility acreage if there is a joint use agreement for City use	6.58
Total Acres			206.67
Population as of January 2010			37,882
Acres per 1,000			5.46